

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PANAMA 03302 111910Z
ACTION ARA-10

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R 101420Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1832
INFO AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
PANCANAL
USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PFOR, SHUM, ES, PN
SUBJECT: DEPORTATION OF PANAMANIAN PRIEST FROM EL SALVADOR

1. THE MAY 6 DEPORTATION OF PANAMANIAN JESUIT JORGE SANSANEDAS BY SALVADOREAN AUTHORITIES HAS ATTRACTED CONSIDERABLE COMMENTARY HERE. STORY HEADLINED IN AFTERNOON "LA REPUBLICA" ON MAY 6 RELATES THE DETAILS OF SANSANEDAS' ARREST AND CONFINEMENT FROM THE CHURCH'S VANTAGE POINT. LOCAL RADIO STATION AIRED STATEMENT BY SANSANEDAS UPON HIS ARRIVAL IN PANAMA: "I DON'T KNOW WHY I WAS DEPORTED.... THE SITUATION IN EL SALVADOR IS DIFFICULT AND TENSE." SANSANEDAS ALSO DESCRIBED ALLEGED MISTREATMENT HE AND OTHERS RECEIVED WHILE UNDER ARREST IN EL SALVADOR. SALVADOREAN FOREIGN MINISTRY COMMUNIQUE CARRIED ON LOCAL TV NEWS CLAIMS THAT SANSANEDAS WAS DEPORTED BECAUSE "IT WAS CONFIRMED THAT HE HAD ENGAGED IN SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES".

2. MAY 8 OP-ED PAGE OF PRO-GOP "DOMINICAL" CARRIES THE TEXT OF A COMMUNIQUE BY THE PANAMANIAN SOCIETY OF JESUS THAT EXPRESSES SOLIDARITY WITH THE CHURCH'S STRUGGLE FOR
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SOCIAL JUSTICE IN EL SALVADOR AND CALLS FOR AN END TO GOES REPRESSION. EDITION ALSO HAS A FULL-PAGE REPRINT OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF SAN SALVADOR'S MAY 6 STATEMENT IN "LA PRENSA GRAFICA" THAT IS REPRODUCED JZAT THE REQUEST OF ARCHBISHOP MARCOS MCGRATH AND THE PANAMANIAN SOCIETY OF JESUS". "CRITICA" TAKES UP THE STORY ON MAY 9 WITH SANSANEDAS CATEGORIZING HIS DEPORTATION AS "AN ATTEMPT

TO DECEIVE WORLD OPINION ABOUT THE TRUE SITUATION IN
EL SALVADOR".

3. COMMENT: MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE SANSANEDAS CASE,
GIVING SHORT SHRIFT TO THE OFFICIAL SALVADOREAN EX-
PLANATION OF THE AFFAIR AND CONCENTRATING ON THE DEPOR-
TATION FOLLOWS EARLIER MEDIA CRITICISM OF THE MOLINA
REGIME, NOTABLY A RECENT SERIES OF ARTICLES BY "CRITICA"
EDITION RUBEN MURGAS DESCRIBING THE RECENT PRESIDENTIAL
ELECTIONS IN EL SALVADOR AS A SHAM. OFFICIALLY THE
PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT IS STAYING OUT OF THE PROBLEM.
BUT TORRIJOS (OR AT LEAST NORIEGA, THE NATIONAL
GUARD'S
G-2 AND PRESS WATCHDOG) HAS ALLOWED THE GOVERNMENT-
CONTROLLED PRESS TO BARK LOUD AND LONG AT THE SALVADOREAN
REGIME. WE DON'T KNOW WHAT ALL THIS DOES TO THE SPECIAL
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EL SALVADOR AND PANAMA WHICH
DERIVES FROM TORRIJOS' EDUCATION IN EL SALVADOR AND HIS
PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP WITH MOLINA. SOON AFTER THE KID-
NAPPING TORRIJOS SEEMED TO WANT TO POLISH UP HIS POPU-
LIST CREDENTIALS BY SOMEHOW
FFERING GOOD OFFICES.
BUT MOLINA'S TOUGH STANCE HAS SINCE LED TORRIJOS TO KEEP
HIS COUNSELS TO HIMSELF.
GONZALEZ

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